NAXOS

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The Romantic Bach

A CELEBRATION OF BACH'S MOST ROMANTIC MUSIC

The Romantic Bach
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach belonged to a dynasty of musicians. In following inevitable family tradition, he excelled his forebears and contemporaries, although he did not always receive the respect he deserved in his own life-time. He spent his earlier career principally as an organist, latterly at the court of one of the two ruling Grand Dukes of Weimar. In 1717 he moved to Cöthen as Court Kapellmeister to the young Prince Leopold and in 1723 made his final move to Leipzig, where he was employed as Cantor at the Choir School of St. Thomas, with responsibility for music in the five principal city churches. In Leipzig he also eventually took charge of the University Collegium musicum and occupied himself with the collection and publication of many of his earlier compositions. Despite widespread neglect for almost a century after his death Bach is now regarded as one of the greatest of all composers.

Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis numbers, abbreviated to BWV, are generally accepted for convenience of reference.

Choral & Vocal Music

Bach wrote a very large amount of choral music, particularly in connection with his employment at Leipzig, where he prepared complete cycles of cantatas for use throughout the church year, in addition to the larger scale settings of the Latin Mass and the accounts of the Passion from the gospels of St. Matthew and of St. John. These works include the Mass in B minor, BWV 232, the St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244, the St. John Passion, BWV 245, the Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248, and the Easter Oratorio, BWV 249, with the revised setting of the Magnificat, BWV 243. Cantatas include, out of over 200 that survive, Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben, BWV 147 (from which the pianist Dame Myra Hess took her piano arrangement under the title Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring, making this the most popular of all), Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 80, Ich habe genug, BWV 82, Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 358, Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut, BWV 199, Wachet auf, BWV 140 and Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen, BWV 51, for soprano,

trumpet, strings and basso continuo. The rather more formal half dozen or so Motets include a memorable version of Psalm CXVII, Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, BWV 230.

Secular Cantatas include the light-hearted Coffee Cantata, BWV 211, a father's attempt to stem his daughter's addiction to the fashionable drink, the Peasant Cantata, BWV 212, in honour of a newly appointed official, two Wedding Cantatas, Weichet nur, BWV 202, and O holder Tag, BWV 210. Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd, BWV 208, was written in 1713 to celebrate the birthday of the hunting Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels and later reworked for the name-day of August III, King of Saxony, in the 1740s. The Italian Non sa che sia dolore, BWV 209, apparently marked the departure of a scholar or friend from Leipzig.

Recommended Recordings

Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut, BWV 199
Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten BWV 202 / Non sa che sia dolore BWV 209
Naxos 8.550431

Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht (Coffee Cantata), BWV 211
Mer hahn en neue Oberkeet (Peasant Cantata), BWV 212
Naxos 8.550641

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 80
Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben, BWV 147
Naxos 8.550642

Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen, BWV 51
Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd, BWV 208
Naxos 8.550643

Christmas Oratorio (3 CD's)
Naxos 8.550428-30

Mass in B Minor (2 CD's)
Naxos 8.550585-6

St. John Passion (2 CD's)
Naxos 8.550664-5

St. Matthew Passion (3 CD's)
Naxos 8.550832-4

Keyboard Music

Important sets of pieces are the six English Suites, BWV 806 - 811; the six French Suites, BWV 812 - 817; the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, written to soothe an insomniac patron; the Italian Concerto, BWV 971, the six Partitas, BWV 825 - 830, suites of dance movements, and the monumental two books of preludes and fugues in all keys, The Well-Tempered Clavier, BWV 846 - 893, the so-called '48'.

Recommended Recordings

Keyboard Favourites (Italian Concerto / Chromatic Fantasia & Fugue / Toccata / Fantasia / Capriccio / French Suite No. 6)
Naxos 8.550066

Goldberg Variations
Naxos 8.550078

Italian Concerto / Fantasia & Fugue
12 Little Preludes
Naxos 8.550571

Inventions and Sinfonias
Naxos 8.550960

Partitas Nos. 1 & 2, BWV 825-6
Naxos 8.550692

Partitas Nos. 3 & 4, BWV 827-8
Naxos 8.550693

Partitas Nos. 5 & 6, BWV 829-30
Naxos 8.550694

English Suites, BWV 806-808
Naxos 8.553012

English Suites, BWV 809-811
Naxos 8.553013

Toccatas
Naxos 8.550708

French Suites, BWV 812-813
Naxos 8.550709

French Suites, BWV 814-817
Naxos 8.550710

Chamber Music

During the period Bach spent at Cöthen he was able to devote his attention more particularly to instrumental composition for solo instruments, smaller groups or for the small court orchestra.

Particularly important are the three Sonatas and three Partitas for unaccompanied violin, BWV 1001 - 6, works that make great technical demands on a player, and the six Suites for unaccompanied cello, BWV 1007 - 1012. There are six Sonatas for violin and harpsichord, BWV 1014 - 1019, and an interesting group of three Sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord, sometimes appropriated today by viola-players and cellists, BWV 1027 - 1029.

Recommended Recordings

Violin Sonatas Nos. 1 & 2 / Partita No. 1
Naxos 8.550569

Violin Sonata No. 3 / Partitas Nos. 2 & 3
Naxos 8.550570

Cello Suites Nos. 1-3
Naxos 8.550677

Cello Suites Nos. 4-6
Naxos 8.550678

Orchestral Music

The six Brandenburg Concertos, BWV 1046 - 1051, dedicated to the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1721, feature a variety of forms and groups of instruments, while the four Orchestral Suites or Overtures, BWV 1066 - 1069, include the famous Air on the G string, a late nineteenth century transcription of the Air from the Suite in D major, BWV 1068.

Recommended Recordings

Brandenburg Concertos (2 CD's)
Naxos 8.550047-8

Orchestral Suites (2 CD's)
Naxos 8.550244-5

Concertos

Three of Bach's violin concertos, written at Cöthen between 1717 and 1723, survive in their original form, with others existing now only in later harpsichord transcriptions. The works in original form are the Concertos in A minor and in E major, BWV 1041 and 1042, and the Double Concerto in D minor, for two violins, BWV 1043.

Bach wrote or arranged his harpsichord concertos principally for the use of himself and his sons with the Leipzig University Collegium musicum between 1735 and 1740. These works include eight Concertos for a single solo harpsichord and strings, BWV 1052 - 1059, and others for two, three and four harpsichords and strings.

Recommended Recordings

Violin Concertos (A minor, E major & Double Concerto)
Naxos 8.550194

Piano Concertos BWV 1052-1054
Naxos 8.550422

Piano Concertos BWV 1055-1058
Naxos 8.550423

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1. **Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068: Air** (5:20)
   - Capella Istropolitana / Jaroslav Dvořák (from Naxos 8.550245)
2. **Violin Concerto in A Minor, BWV 1041: Andante** (6:59)
   - Takako Nishizaki, Violin / Capella Istropolitana / Oliver Dohnányi (from Naxos 8.550194)
3. **Suite No. 2 in B Minor, BWV 1067: Badinerie** (1:24)
   - Capella Istropolitana / Jaroslav Dvořák (from Naxos 8.550244)
4. **Piano Concerto in E Major, BWV 1053: Siciliano** (5:59)
   - Hae-won Chang, Piano / Camerata Cassovia / Robert Stankovsky (from Naxos 8.550422)
5. **Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248: Sinfonia** (5:58)
   - Failoni Chamber Orchestra / Géza Oberfrank (from Naxos 8.550428)
6. **Anna Magdalena's Notebook: Menuet in G Major, BWV Anh 114** (1:34)
   - János Sebestyén, Piano (from Naxos 8.550679)
7. **Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F Major, BWV 1046: Adagio** (5:17)
   - Capella Istropolitana / Bohdan Warchal (from Naxos 8.550047)
8. **Goldberg Variations, BWV 988: Aria** (3:19)
   - Chen Pi-hsien, Piano (from Naxos 8.550078)
9. **Violin Sonata No. 4 in C Minor, BWV 1017: Siciliano (arr. J. Dvořák)** (3:03)
   - Capella Istropolitana / Jaroslav Dvořák (from Naxos 8.550244)
10. **Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042: Adagio** (7:26)
    - Takako Nishizaki, Violin / Capella Istropolitana / Oliver Dohnányi (from Naxos 8.550194)
11. **Italian Concerto in F Major, BWV 971: Andante** (5:11)
    - Joseph Banowetz, Piano (from Naxos 8.550066)
12. **Cantata "Hunt", BWV 208: Sheep May Safely Graze (arr. Hayman)** (5:18)
    - Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra / Richard Hayman (from Naxos 8.990005)
13. **Piano Concerto in F Minor, BWV 1056: Largo** (2:50)
    - Hae-won Chang, Piano / Camerata Cassovia / Robert Stankovsky (from Naxos 8.550423)
14. **Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major, BWV 1050: Affetuoso** (6:34)
    - Capella Istropolitana / Bohdan Warchal (from Naxos 8.550048)
15. **Suite No. 1 in C Major, BWV 1066: Forlane** (2:40)
    - Capella Istropolitana / Jaroslav Dvořák (from Naxos 8.550244)
16. **Concerto for 2 Violins and Strings in D Minor, BWV 1043: Largo ma non tanto** (6:49)
    - Takako Nishizaki and Alexander Jablokov, Violins / Capella Istropolitana / Oliver Dohnányi (from Naxos 8.550194)
17. **Cantata, BWV 147: Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring** (3:28)
    - Hungarian Radio Chorus / Failoni Chamber Orchestra / Mátyás Antál (from Naxos 8.550642)

(Playing Time: 79:09)

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